



## Call for papers: Special edition of Critical Discourse Studies

### The Law and Critical Discourse Studies

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*The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread. (Jacques Anatole François Thibault)*

We invite papers that carry out analyses of the law and legal processes using methods from across the spectrum of Critical Discourse Studies. Papers are welcome which carry out critical analysis of law in fields such as immigration law, corporate law, civil rights law, criminal law, environmental law, family law, entertainment law, employment law, health law, as well as the discourses surrounding the implementation of specific laws; or in domains such as policy, legislation, courtroom discourse, judgements, police interactions, parole hearings. This can also involve an analysis of the modes of how settings and performance of law play a role in how power plays out.

There has been surprisingly little attention to the law in Critical Discourse Studies. This is notable given the sheer amount of such legal texts and talk which play a role in how we carry out our lives and organize our societies. Given Critical Discourse Studies' interest in the role of language and communication in the functioning of society, in particular as regards to matters of justice and injustice and the exercise of power and control, this would appear to be one area that calls for our attention. The law, like any form of language, carries ideas and values. It classifies the world and represents identities and human agency. And the law shapes, legitimizes and naturalizes social practices. It also formalizes and naturalizes discourses disseminated by other institutions in society, such as government, the media, schools, welfare and immigration agencies, the family and the organizations which support the global spread of neo-liberal capitalism.

A CDS approach to the Law, aligns to some extent with core interests of the Sociology of Law. Here the aim has been to throw light on the highly value laden nature of the way that laws and legal processes define things like rights, responsibilities, morality, rules of personal conduct, justice, punishment, the conduct of businesses, corporations and the military, and reveal the social consequences thereof. A liberal view of the law is that it is part of maintaining civil society, through a rational set of rules which treat all individuals in the same way, offering us and the social order protection. The ideas, values and classifications it embodies are officially represented as those held and shared within civil society - what is to be cherished, protected, prevented, sanctioned against. Yet sociologists and critical theorists have pointed out that laws and the legal system best serve and protect the interests of dominant and the powerful. The law formalizes these discourses under the guise of rational civil interest.

There has in fact been significant work done by linguists, influenced mostly by sociolinguistics, pragmatics and conversation analysis, under the broader umbrella term of 'Forensic linguistics', showing the massive potential of finely detailed analytical research on the Law and legal processes. But in this case the interest has been on using methods to contribute to legal language and processes, rather than to reveal the wider social and political matters of power and injustice which are the concern of CDS.

This special edition of Critical Discourse Studies invites papers which carry out analyses of legal language in a way that is critical, which presents insights into the ideological nature of the law. Papers can be from across the spectrum of discourse studies but must engage with the task of digging deeper into specific instances to show how the law and legal language carries representations of identities, agency, processes, which support and formalize hegemonic interests in society. This can be across the different fields, domains and modes of the Law and legal processes.

Examples of topics are:

How do laws create unfair burdens on more vulnerable members of society, or the poor?

How are laws used to provide legitimation for regulating matters which are in fact politically oriented?

Do specific laws embody and formalize the ideology of neoliberalism?

How do the heritage laws at any time reflect present discourses of nationalism?

How do laws governing minority rights relate to wider ideologies at any given time?

What kinds of legal frameworks give license to transnational corporations to act unethically?

How do food laws unfairly privilege certain actors and exacerbate the problems of food safety and security?

How do Laws help to obscure corporate crime, given the emphasis on the individual in Law?

Send abstracts to: [chengle163@hotmail.com](mailto:chengle163@hotmail.com); [portvale100@gmail.com](mailto:portvale100@gmail.com)

Abstracts should be clear about argument made, relevant methods, theory, data and process of analysis.

Deadline for abstracts: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

Decision on abstracts: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

First draft of full paper: before 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021.

Review process

Revised papers: before 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2021

Completed papers to publisher: March 2022